

DON'T PANIC

Being arrested is easy, you just stay quiet and wait for them to let you out.

If you can, remember the arresting officers number and ask what it is that you are being nicked for.

You don't have to tell the police anything except your name and address.

Don't sign anything except the list of your belongings.

If they ask you anything (especially if you have an interview) answer...

"NO COMMENT"

Solicitors No'.-

Legal support No'.-

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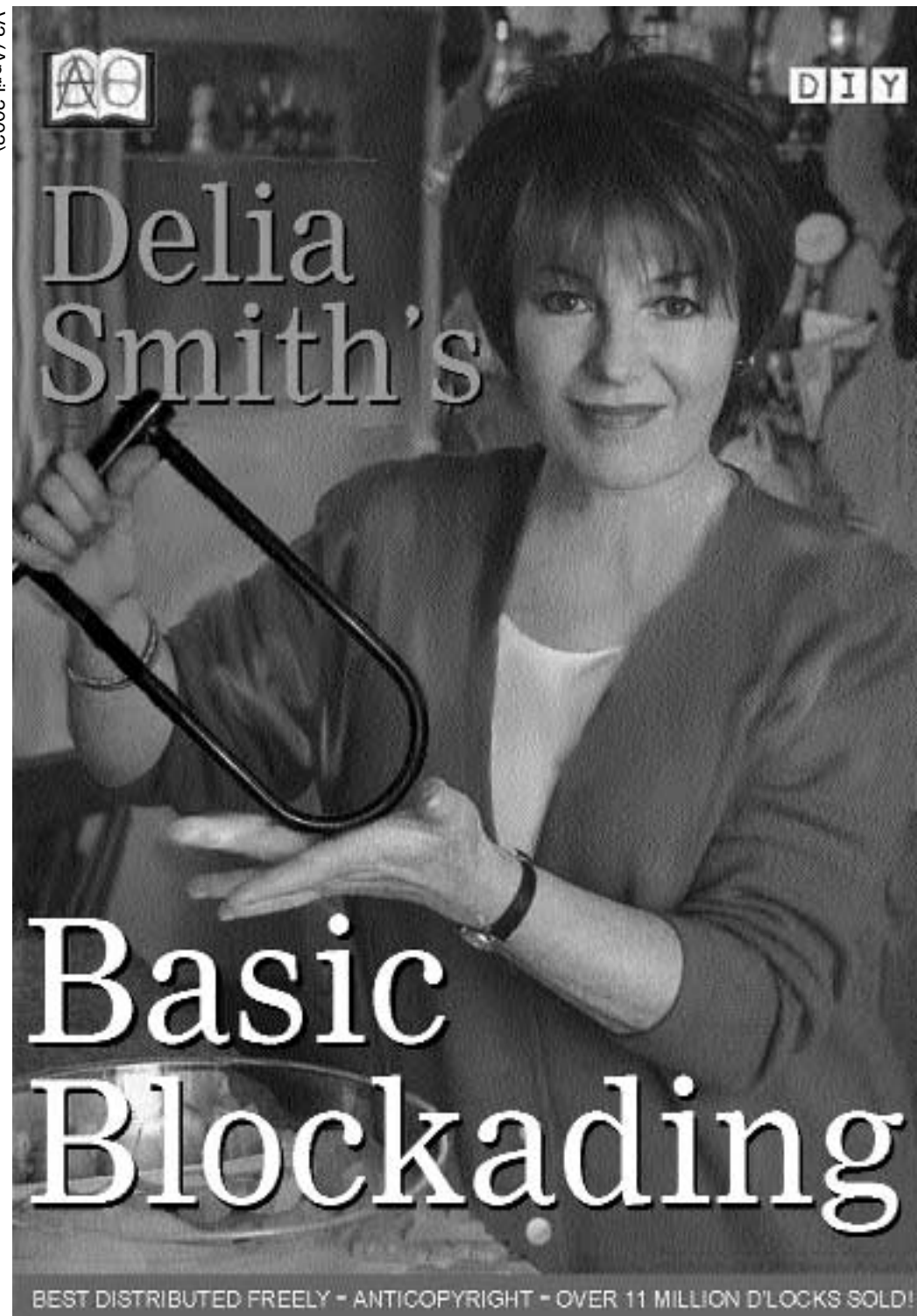
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V2 (April 2002)



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An Unnecessary Introduction



When you consider the number of people that regularly watch Countdown, or buy the Anglers Monthly, it's quite remarkable that direct action has such a relatively small following.

What other activity combines the theatrical potential of being your own private investigator, with the sort of bonding experience execs pay hundreds for on paintballing weekends? What else so seamlessly unites the creation of silly costumes, the opportunity to wave to your mum on the telly and lots of healthy outdoor exercise?

Yet who am I to describe how to conduct such matters? One of the main points about actually going out and doing something is to discover that much of what you thought you knew was wrong. There are no experts, there are no safeguards, you are responsible, and you can change the world.

But bringing about a revolution in consciousness and behaviour probably requires a bit of co-operation, so here are some things a few people have learnt along the way.

This booklet is ridiculously long because it's fairly comprehensive. It assumes no previous knowledge, (and alot of the content sprung from questions asked by people who hadn't been involved in actions before) but there may well be some handy insights for the more veteran reader too. It's mostly based on experiences with blockades at GM animal feed mills, but obviously the basic principles could be applied elsewhere to inconvenience any damaging influence: a peat extraction plant, a sweatshop labour exploiter, radio one DJs...

Good luck, and enjoy.

1 April 2002

If you have any comments or suggestions, email delia@talk.to or visit www.talk.to/delia

After you do it

It's easy to forget to plan for the end, but try to ensure you have all the eventualities covered. **People may be arrested** and taken to the police station, in which case it's important that not only does your support person on the end of the phone know where everyone has been taken, but also that they can then call on people with vehicles to collect them when they are released (as well as sending in cheery notes and goodies to keep up their spirits while they wait.)

In the event of no one getting nicked you need to **set a meeting point** that can be reached without transport, a service station or a pub for example. Don't underestimate how knackered you're likely to be by this stage, anywhere warm, nearby and with toilets will do.

If people leave the site at separate times it's important to have someone who's responsible for waiting around until everyone's out, and **check everyone's been accounted for**. Also ensure that if there was shared transport on the way there, check that everyone gets a lift back.

If you can possibly manage it **have a 'debrief'** - a full discussion about what worked and what didn't, straight away. This booklet was compiled from notes made during a debrief. They are a really good way of learning (and recording) important lessons, allowing people to tell their stories and giving everyone an opportunity to express how they felt. Actions are often very emotional experiences and plenty of space should be allowed both at the meeting and in the weeks afterwards, to talk about peoples responses. Keep the momentum, propose the next action. Then go down the pub.



Your feedback is welcomed...
email delia@talk.to
or visit www.talk.to/delia

Check-lists

Transport and vehicles. Before the day -

- Make sure you know what vehicles are going to be used (if any).
- Ensure that they won't contain anything you really wouldn't want found if stopped.
- Make sure that somebody checks the water, oil and tyre pressure etc.
- Ensure all vehicles have plenty of fuel - don't leave it until on the way to the action!
- Make sure you have drivers, they know the way and have no other vital roles.
- Plan where the vehicles will be parked during the action.
- Make sure everyone know what equipment needs to be in which vehicle
- Ensure people know which vehicle they need to be in.
- If doing it without vehicles, make sure everyone knows how to get there (and when).

Before you leave 'home' check you have-

- Emptied your pockets and person of any incriminating information or substances.
- A bust card and a bail address (see back cover)
- Pen and paper to note stuff down (like who's been taken where by who)
- A list of peoples mobile numbers.
- Watches (don't forget to synchronise them if timing is important in your plan) and phones/short wave radios if you're using them, and spare batteries.
- The stuff you need for your role - the camera if you're doing the photos, the d-lock you've been practising with if you're locking on, banners etc.
- Food, drink and spare cash.

(Be aware that written stuff especially might be incriminating if you are arrested and searched so be prepared to destroy or eat paper work if necessary!)

What

The most important thing to establish is what you actually want the action to achieve, and plan around that. For example,

Introducing people to direct action who hadn't done any before.

Costing the company as much money as possible by blockading them and thus giving them another financial incentive to abandon their dodgy practises.

Putting the matter in the public eye by talking to people and giving journos a pretty picture and a story to hang the issue round.

Who

If you're getting people into a situation they've never encountered before it's really important that everyone knows what their roles are and has a chance to discuss various things that may happen and what their responses might be. As well as ensuring everyone is clear about why you're doing a blockade rather than, say, writing letters or lobbying. Everyone should be involved as much as possible with every aspect of planning and preparing for the action.

It's almost impossible to overestimate how long it will take for people to explore ideas. Everyone's behaviour (especially under the novel circumstances of an action), is unpredictable.

However, for this reason it's vital there are some basic principles and objectives agreed on and stuck to. Deciding whether to allowing people who haven't attended any of the planning sessions to come along is a difficult choice. While their contributions may save the day, it can be quite irresponsible to involve people who aren't necessarily clear about what was intended.

A compromise could be a pairing up system whereby someone who does go to meetings relays what happens to the person they intend to work with on the day. It may be helpful to have a veteran available in the weeks preceding the action so that people can discuss ideas and queries as they think of them, but this should not be relied on. Most people don't know what to ask until they've experienced the situation.

COMMUNICATION

When people are putting themselves at risk as a matter of personal conscience it is vital that they feel empowered by the experience and in no way devolve decisions to anyone else about what is happening. To do so takes away the vital exercising of personal responsibility and places an unfair burden on the person elected 'leader'. If the group does propose to act as a non-hierarchical co-operative of individuals (deary me), it's vital everyone's clear about what this means in practice.

There can never be enough communication going on at an action. It's the one thing people always wish they'd done better, and probably the hardest and most affirming thing to do well.

Amongst yourselves

Some things to sort out beforehand-

* How opportunistic does the group want to be? For example if a couple of people see the chance to occupy an office when they were going to climb a silo how would the rest of the group be affected?

* Will people try and do criminal damage/economic sabotage? This has several ramifications. For example, factories and industrial plants are notoriously dangerous places. Playing about with equipment you don't understand could well hurt you or get a worker injured at a later stage. Secondly, even if you're confident about what you're doing you will up the stakes for those that are more vulnerable - the police liaison and people locked on. Even if damage that's done won't necessarily become apparent until after you leave those that have been trying to build relationships with the workers may well feel undermined by it, as a blockade is otherwise a very open and accountable kind of protest. Criminal damage is a logical extension of trying to cost the firm as much money as possible through loss of earnings, but a blockade is probably not the best time to do it. This one needs to be talked about thoroughly.

* How long should the blockade go on for, under what circumstances would the group consider moving, and how will this be decided?

It's really helpful to have **support people** whose main task is to ensure everyone has all the information they need about what's going on. Roads and industrial areas are really noisy places, and depending on how spread out the group is and which direction people are facing in its easy for people to fall out of the news loop.

Before you do it

This booklet contains just some of the ideas that have been tried. The principle of 'locking on' is the basis for most medium term occupations, and the possibilities are only limited by your imagination. But it's always worth considering the following-

If you were the manager, **how would you get around your obstruction?**

If you're in a group lock-on **will the blockade fail if someone really feels they need to leave?**

Is there a way to re-form quickly or still be effective if they do?

The police can use '**reasonable force**' to remove people. In a couple of road protest evictions this has meant they've broken arms to get people out of the way. Literally sticking your neck out for the cause may seem an extreme tactic, but as with most civil disobedience, it is your vulnerability which makes you powerful. If the stake is your life (and the potentially attendant manslaughter charges), few people will risk endangering it for the sake of a few hours work. At the other end of the spectrum most blockades have been met with a 'hands off' approach by the police, who haven't even made half hearted attempts to pull people in arm tubes apart to see if they're really linked together.

Necks are delicate things, everyone's got away with it so far, and life's full of calculated risks (crossing the road for example) but think about it carefully first.

Work in pairs on the day, so that everyone knows that there's someone looking out for them. You'll be warmer, safer and happier if you're **close to your mates**.

If you're doing a winter action **it will get incredibly cold**. Wear lots of layers, take an interesting variety of wholesome snacks to distract yourself with, don't drink too much but bring a few flasks of tea for emergencies, consider hot water bottles and think about how you're going to carry it all with you.

Practise locking on together beforehand using all the stuff you intend to be wearing/carrying all the equipment you intend to use. Time yourselves, experiment with different formations, work out who you're going to be working with on the day.

Sites are full of convenient large immovable things that you can turn against them. Using their own big heavy lorries/ equipment/ buildings as the basis for your blockade is far easier than trying to import your own large heavy stuff. If at all possible **keep it simple**.

Always have spare D'locks available. You never know what unexpected opportunities may turn up once things begin (police cars park in some strange places). Be flexible, be prepared.

You can make a hammock sling to perch in out of strong light material like rip-stop nylon, knotted at either end, with the two ends of a short rope tied securely just inside these knots.

The rope can be slung over your shoulders as you shin up, and slipped over the poles at the top.

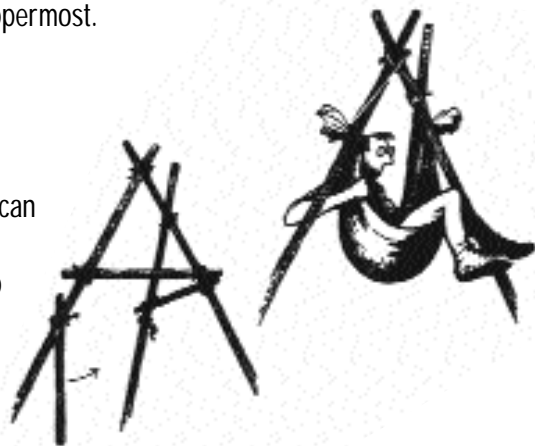
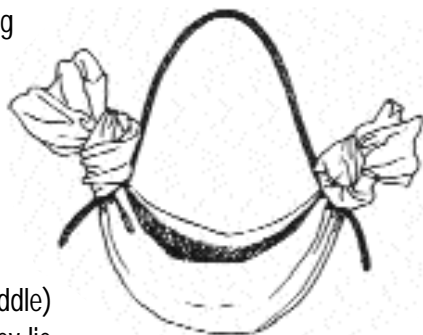
When sorted out, paint 'L' 'R' and 'M' (left, right and middle) on the foot ends of the poles, the sides facing up as they lie ready to be raised. The M pole should be uppermost.

*** PRACTISE putting it up**
Shambles develops into lightning expertise

Extras: For protection and extra stability you can install three short horizontal poles with clips. Leave each short pole dangling from one clip until the tripod is up, then do up the second clip.

A climbing harness and slings makes the job easier. Don't forget the spanner.

You could stabilise against accidental slippage with these bars by using a circumference of rope linking the legs 2 or 3ft above the ground (Exhaust or big jubilee clips are useful to stop this rope riding up). However this method will not provide protection from attack and the police may try to 'walk' the tripod out of the way by shifting each leg a little at a time.



To facilitate updating and decision making there should preferably be one person (with a talent for listening, and who knows everyone) who's job it is to approach each individual in turn and tell them what seems to be going on, what the others are thinking, and to find out how that person is feeling about it all. Particularly if the person is locked on* it's important to check that the message has been received and understood. It may even be an idea for the facilitator to repeat back what they think the person has said to ensure they've got it right. Nine times out of ten this will probably be just a 'yeah, got that, seems fine', but it's really important to get it accurate if it's more complicated than that. The facilitator should regular inform the police liaison and media tart about what people are saying and any new information that arises.

Be aware that if you're in a potentially uncomfortable lock on, or reeling from coping with the aggression of others, it's difficult to think straight. Under these circumstances, you have to look out for one another and constantly double check with people that their decisions or behaviour are what they actually want to be doing and not a knee-jerk response. If in doubt, ALWAYS ASK.

Some words on phones and two way radios

If you have people spread around the site it's important they're aware of what's going on in other areas too. Mobile phones are a convenient (but expensive) way of keeping track of everyone, but be aware that if your personal phone falls into police hands they will instantly know all your mates numbers, which is bad. There are other security implications regarding mobile phones which might not be too relevant for something accountable like a blockade. Be aware that mobile phones are effectively tracking devices - you might want to consider purchasing unregistered pay-as-you-go type phones for use solely for actions.

! Remember to charge your battery and ensure that you have plenty of credit beforehand !

Hand held two-way radios or walkie talkies may be a solution. You can get PMR446 sets (personal mobile radios that require no license) which are good for about half a mile or so. A pair will cost about £40 and can be bought in Dixons etc. Have a practice at using them before the action and get an idea of their range. Double check your battery stash. Consider getting rechargeable NiMH batteries (about £2.50 each from camera shops), they last for ages and are far better than normal batteries). If you need to extend battery life and are within earshot of the rest of the group it may be worth taking whistles so can alert people that you want to start a conversation.

JARGON 'Locked on' means to be attached to something or someone with some kind of hardware like bicycle D-locks or arm tubes. These devices are sometimes referred to as lock-downs or lock-boxes.
BUSTER See page 14 onwards for more details about how these are used.

Possible techno fixes for other police anti-tripod tactics

It has been known in some areas for the police to fit wheels to tripods in order to move them. One possible way to make it more difficult for them to do this would be to weld obstructions to the bottom of the lower six inches of the poles thus making it almost impossible for them to clamp on their usual casters. Just a few nuts or a bit of iron bar should do the trick

Alternatively you could use wooden poles, such as conifer thinings lashed at the top with rope. The police in this country have no experience with these and may be reluctant to use wheels on them. Wooden tripods have been used in North America and Australia and are very glam.

Talking to the Media

The media are bad. They tend to report conflict not issues, they'll get all the details wrong, and they'll either misunderstand you or deliberately demonise you. But they are the quickest route to reaching the maximum number of people and often it's the long term dodgy publicity which the companies fear rather than the short term economic impact of the blockade. If you do decide to grasp the nettle you'll need to get at least two people to deal with the media as their primary role. One somewhere off site to send out the press release once the blockade has begun and to phone the newsdesk to check they've received it. Then another on site to do live interviews and updates from a mobile or direct to any cameras which may appear. Have a full list of newspapers, radio stations and TV crews prepared before hand. Local rags are desperate for stories and should cover stuff in some detail, and local radio may give you live coverage if you ring them up and say what you're doing. National media may not be worth attempting unless you're doing something really timely or dramatic. If you discover a particularly keen journalist who does a good write up remember to make a note of their details so you can contact them directly next time. Similarly watch out for naff reports, you may want to boycott the malicious hacks and publications in the future.

The press release should be prepared in advance with input from the whole group. It's a great chance to check everyone agrees about the objectives and have a giggle at dodgy attempts at headline puns. The snowball handbook* has a good chapter on how to write an acceptable press release. The basics are-

Contact details and date. A headline, and an introductory paragraph which covers the who, why, were, when, what.

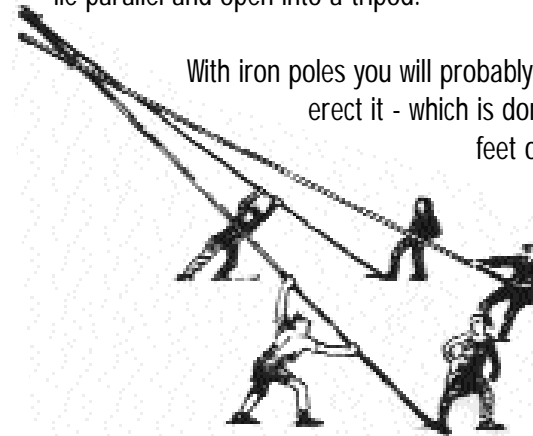
Two paragraphs with the information about the issues you want to include- preferable mostly comprising of 'quotes from spokespersons' as they can dump them into the article wholesale without having to substantiate it.

Some 'notes to editors' with more detailed background information for the really enthusiastic. If it's any longer than a side of A4 you're liable to lose them, media types have very short attention spans.

You may also need to create alternative versions of the press release if your plans are quite ambitious. For example there's no use having one which says *"at 9 this morning 20 mutant pigs occupied the conveyorbelt of BOCM Paul's mill in Exeter"*, if you get there at 10 to discover there's a lorry blocking your access and you've had to go for the silos instead.

*The Snowball handbook is available online from- www.gn.apc.org/pmhp/gs

The clip for the third pole has to be about a foot below the main poles' clip, to allow the main poles to close over it. and the central swivel of the clip should be at roughly 120 degrees round the pole from that of the main clip. Experiment until you get the clips placed so that the poles can lie parallel and open into a tripod.



With iron poles you will probably need at least 5 people to erect it - which is done after first spreading the feet of the 'A' while simultaneously raising the third foot.

The jobs are- 2 strong people to lift each of the 2 main legs by walking down beneath it from apex to base.

One person to pull the third leg out to prop up the 'A'.

And 2 people with their feet braced against the base of each main pole to stop it slidding forward. These bracers must concentrate. If a foot slips the whole thing can crash down on someones head.



With lighter aluminium poles you might manage it with 3 people.

Once it's erected at least one person needs to shin up it at the speed of light to be out of reach at the top. If it's a damp day this can prove very tricky, and a rope dangling down from the apex or a climbing harness with prusiks would be useful.

SCAFF TRIPODS

(a users guide)

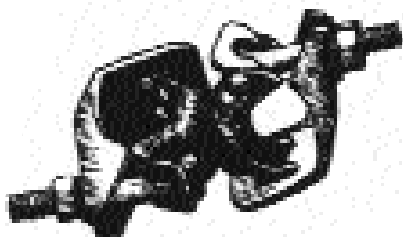
For your basic tripod you will need:

3 full length scaffolding poles (about 21ft long)

2 swivelling scaff clips

Some rope. Cheap blue polyprop is fine.

A spanner for the nuts on the clips.



You will also need a fairly large space (high if indoors) for setting them up, experimenting and practising.

It's tricky to get the clips fitted on so that the poles can lie parallel as well as erect into tripods.

See the assembly as 2 main poles in an 'A' shape, plus a third pole to prop them up.



Your media tart on site should be in contact with the faxer/poner to iron out the final details. Don't release the press release before the action begins (even if it's 'embargoed'), the first thing most hacks will do is ring up your target or the police.

Although it may be a tremendous relief to have someone to talk to the media for you, it's not very egalitarian. Everyone should feel comfortable enough with the issues to spout the four or five main **soundbites**. If you really drum these into yourselves it's amazing how easily they roll off the tongue when the adrenaline gets pumping. Role-play sessions can be really good for bringing out some juicy quotes and exploring some of the more tedious things you may have to deal with. Once you've decided that, say, the main point is the second hand consumption of GM by an oblivious populace, then practise bringing the conversation back round to that. When asked *"what are you going to do about going to the toilet?"* Try *"well like the British public awaiting safe dairy and meat products, I'm just going to have to hang on."* Or something cleverer, but you get the idea. They will be obsessed with the practicalities of the action and reticent about its reasons. If you don't mention the issues constantly, they will avoid them. They might ignore them anyway but at least you tried.

For TV and newspaper coverage a lot will ride on what sort of image you're making. Consideration is worth applying to **silly themed costumes**- potentially nice compositions with the company name clearly in the background, and lots of **good clear banners**. A major drawback of doing something inside company grounds, out of sight from zoom lenses, is that most photographers are far from intrepid and won't venture in for a shot, so if you have the numbers a bit of accessible street theatre outside may be useful.

It's worth taking a camera, and preferably a good photographer with you, to get those exciting action shots of things getting set up, and the articulate ones with your banner nice and clearly placed. If you've got a digital camera don't forget to use a high resolution, as papers won't be interested in low quality images. Declare the availability of photos loudly and proudly on your press release. Cameras are good to have about the place for conflict situations too, both as a calming influence and as evidence after the event. If you know anyone with a video camera, drag them along.

! Don't forget to include our own media - Schnews, EarthFirst! Action Update, Indymedia etc. !
! www.schnews.org.uk uk.indymedia.org www.undercurrents.org !

Of course the best way of **talking to the public is directly**; there's so little interaction with strangers in society generally that you can make quite a big impression by just being friendly and handing out simple leaflets explaining what's going on. Your target may be tucked away on an industrial estate or rural backwater so you probably won't have much passing traffic, but if there are people in your group who don't want to travel for the action then they could maybe do a simultaneous leafleting in an appropriate retail outlet to spread the word.

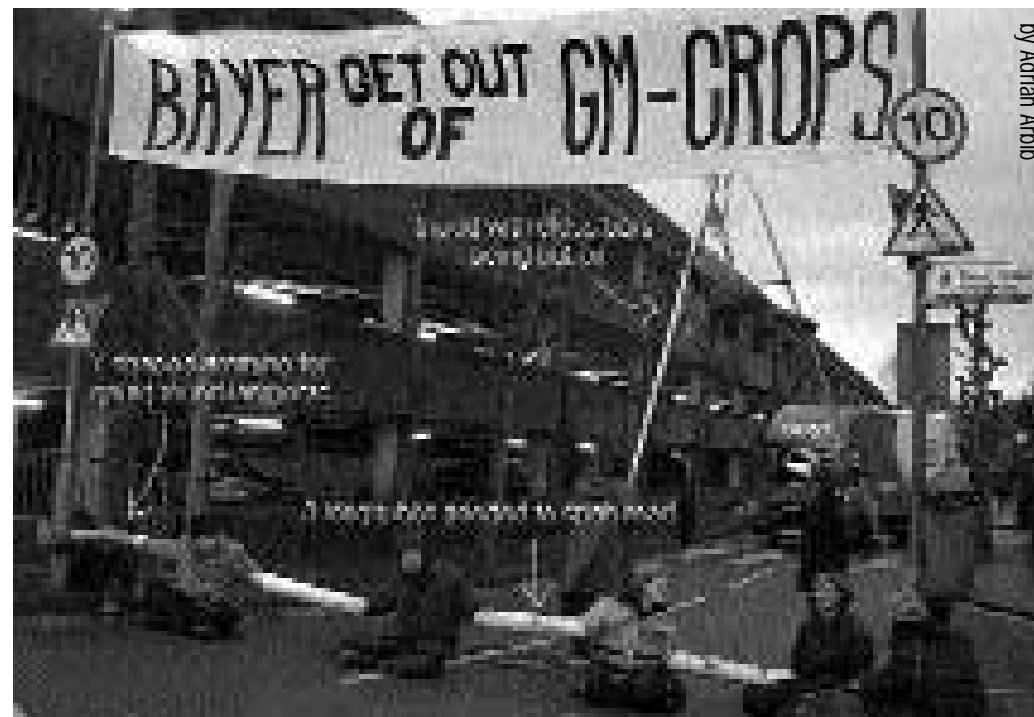
The employees & the manager

When arriving on site it's really important to make a good impression on the workers and their boss. It's likely that the first people you'll encounter are **drivers**. They will be wierded out. People get very territorial about their workplaces, and especially their vehicles. It's a good idea to have people dressed conventionally doing the approaching, preferably ones that look like their mum, or are invested with some kind of authority. It's amazing how differently people respond if you approach them wearing a suit and carrying a clipboard.

If you're especially on the case, name tags (not necessarily accurate ones) or high visibility floro jackets might be nice. The main thing is to convey an air of calm inevitable reassurance. You are as the taxman, an irritating but legitimate force of nature, and you are not their problem. They don't have to make any decisions about the fact that that there's someone dressed as a festive pig attached to their propshaft. It's up to the manager and the police, they might as well put their feet up and have a fag break.

It's worth making a batch of leaflets targeted specifically at workers, with the basic information about why you're there, and a clear statement that you want to target the company, not them, and that you're sorry about the disruption. Many drivers are self employed or (like the poor unfortunate site security guard) stand to get in a lot of trouble because of you. It's not their fault they're poor misguided cogs in the great capitalist machine. Give them a leaflet and share your chocolate with them.

The manager is ultimately liable for any injury or accident which occurs on the site and you need to remind him repeatedly and emphatically of his health and safety duties. If people are occupying silos or cranes, or running around inside the plant it's his (they're almost always male) job to ensure the machinery is turned off and that none of his employees lose their temper. Try telling him exactly why you're there, what you intend to do, and try and keep him around in the early stages when everything's a bit more fragile. He'll probably have more influence over any enraged employees than the police. You may want to say what time you intend to leave, as this will give him an entirely delusional sense of control, which in turn may calm him down. If you overestimate rather than underestimate there's less likely to be annoyed comeback later in the day, but it can make it seem like you gave up before you intended to, which is a bit crap too. This is another one for discussion.



Tripods

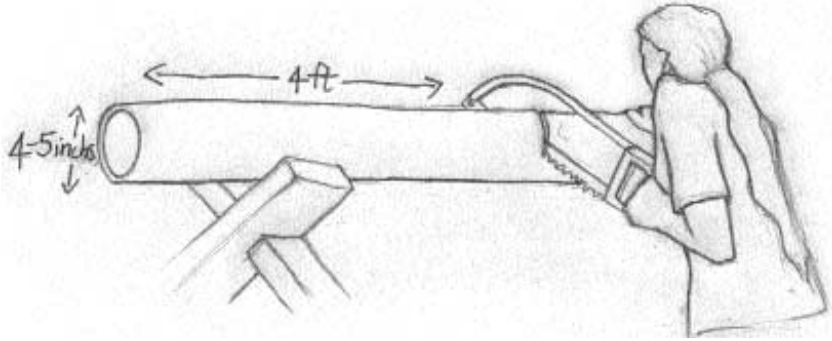
The photo above shows what a terribly photogenic way of occupying space tripods can be (human armtube chains are also rather pretty). Tripods can be useful for blocking all sorts of things. They require three scaffolding poles, a bit of practise, and couple of minutes to set up. The tactic was developed during the nineties as a tool for road protests and Reclaim The Streets.

The cops have had fair a bit of experience with them and most forces aren't totally baffled. Responses to anticipate might be: they shuffle the tripod out of the way by walking each leg a little at a time; they attach wheels to the 'legs' and trundle the whole thing off with the person on top left dangling somewhere irrelevant; the police climber team arrive and slowly build a scaffolding tower up underneath to reach the bod (who could then D'lock himself to a pole to delay them even further). Whatever approach they try, it takes them a while to get their stuff together and often they don't even try.

Consideration should be given as to how you will get your poles to the site. They can be grabbed from the top of a van or stashed somewhere close and carried in. (You would really appreciate aluminium poles if you can get them, they're more expensive but much lighter). Loads of actions have been compromised due to the police confiscating the tripod before it arrives at the site. Spend some time working out the best way to get it there and have a backup plan just in case it doesn't make it.

Making your armtube

First find a scrap metal merchants that have metal tubing like lamp posts, rolled steel, galvanised, cast iron etc about 5 inches in diameter.

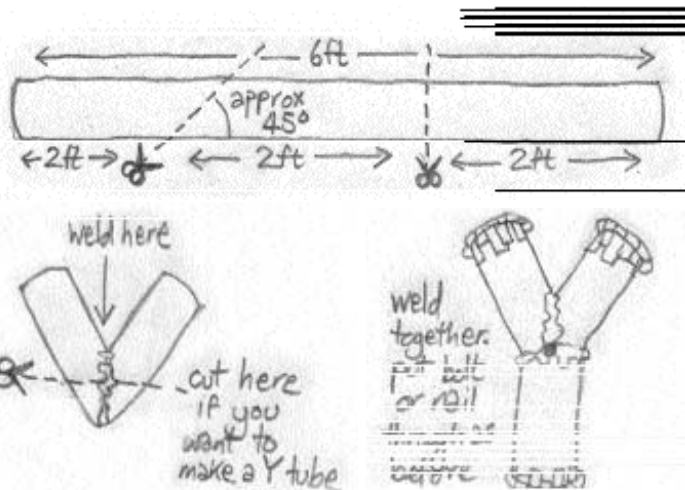


then use a hacksaw or angle grinder to cut the metal pipe into about 4ft lengths, shorter ones are possible, but make access to the 'cuffs' easier.



More elaborate arm tubes

Y shaped tubes are great for securing off chain ends around objects such as lamposts (see Bayer photo). They do require welding though and may be heavier than straight tubes.



V shaped tubes are a more comfortable way for one person to secure themselves round something and provide an alternative to D'locks.

With the cops.

When dealing with the cops it may be useful to have specific person who's job is to liase with the police, build up a relationship with them, and convey their intentions to the rest of the group. However this person needs to be aware that a) if they give the cops their real or full name etc (which will be asked for) they make themselves vulnerable to hassle latter on, especially if b) they don't explain that, delighted as they are to talk to the police, they in no way represent anyone other than themselves, are not in a position to make decisions which affect anyone other than themselves and are there just as a way for the police to disseminate information to people, a service which they may choose to withdraw at any time.

Police liason can be a useful delay tactic. Those preoccupied with being locked on don't have to deal with some charmer in a uniform making amateurish attempts at information gathering, and the liaison person can drag things out by taking as much time as they fancy to tell each individual in turn what the sergeant has just said. If appropriate they can then go back and say "they'll need half an hour to think about that one and discuss what consensus they might reach on the matter" The cops love being given a negotiation situation to practice on and can often be spun along for hours.

A brief note on the police for those who aren't used to them:

The police often lie to people to get their way. Although it can be part of the non violent approach to try and treat them as trustworthy individuals it is important to remember that in any civil disobedience situation, however sympathetic they may be to your cause, they will regard you as criminals. They are obliged to tell you anything that they feel will keep you/the situation under control. It's their job to try and stop you from being an effective blockade. They may employ jovial reasonableness, threats of extreme charges or invent stories about your impact on the employees being held up. They might be straight down the line about everything and genuinely interested in keeping the peace. But in the majority of cases this is unfortunately not so. It's also their job to gather information. They do ask questions about you, they do keep files of this information and they may well use it to push the appropriate buttons in interviews latter.

If they start probing and you don't want to seem unfriendly it's easy enough to turn the conversation around. For example, when regaled with "How many of you are undergraduates then eh? I bet you all are" try responding with something like "that's an interesting assumption, why do you think that? Are you university educated? The status of academia in a post-modern society's quite fascinating don't you find?" etc.

It's always nice to be nice, being nice to the police is an immensely radical thing to do, and can provide golden moments of demolished stereotypes, but if you do decide to open up only talk about yourself, never others, or the way the group organises. It's always wise, if not necessarily pleasant, to start from a position of justified paranoia and work backwards.

There's an old adage that the most powerful tool in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed. It can take some imagination to regard constable Smith as the oppressor, which is a good thing, but sometimes that's used as an excuse to not confront their small-mindedness and pointless bullying. The police are used to getting their own way, and the British don't like upsetting people unnecessarily. When the cops arrive on the scene they may set arbitrary rules about who's allowed to go where and do what, just to remind themselves and everyone else that they're in charge. For many people the idea of obeying someone just because they're in a uniform goes against the ethos of personal responsibility and that ignoring authority is a healthy way to remind everyone that the positions of policer and policed are often ridiculous and damaging. Nudging the boundaries of everyone's expectations can inspire reflection and respect, or get you nicked for breach of the peace. It should be a matter of ongoing discussion, and is best done with cheek, rather than aggression.

Using the Police

While it may be philosophically distasteful, it could be useful to ring the police yourselves as you enter the site and explain to them what's going on. This gives you the initiative over the mill manager (who will call them within a few minutes of your appearance anyway) as the police will get your angle on the situation first before dealing with those they would normally regard as the injured party.



The sketchiest moments on any action are the first few minutes when everyone's surprised by the surrealness of it all and trying to decide whether it's their problem or not. Having the police there can be a calming influence on irate drivers and offers you some protection against their more violent tendencies.

Tools of the trade

You might simply get loads of people together and use the sheer force of numbers as the blockade. Unless you have hundreds of people and have somehow completely managed to catch the cops unaware, this method is unlikely to work for long when the police come in heavy handed and start hauling people away. Sitting down and linking arms will help at this stage but can only delay the inevitable.

If you really want to be sure of maintaining a blockade for any reasonable length of time then it may be more efficient and realistic to opt to fewer people and some appropriate technology. This is where hardware comes into play.

D'locks

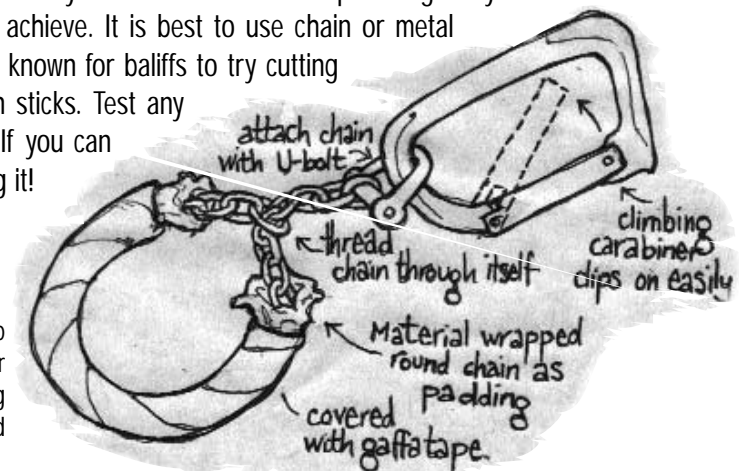
These are just the ordinary bicycle locks (like the one shown on the front cover). Buy full sized versions that will fit around peoples necks and still have room to go around a lamp post etc. Try them on in the shop and avoid the ones that swivel as they are virtually impossible to get on. D'locks can be bought for under £10 and it's probably not worth spending a lot unless you go for really high quality specimens and plan to use them on a particularly critical action.

Arm tubes

These are normally used so that two or more people can link arms in a way that makes it very difficult for anybody to use force or torture techniques to break their hold. They are best made from metal but some people have used plastic drain pipes, cardboard or composites. To resist eviction at protest sites, arm-tubes are often built into heavy or fixed objects such as concrete filled oil drums, however such tactics are probably impractical for most blockades.

Carabina Cuffs

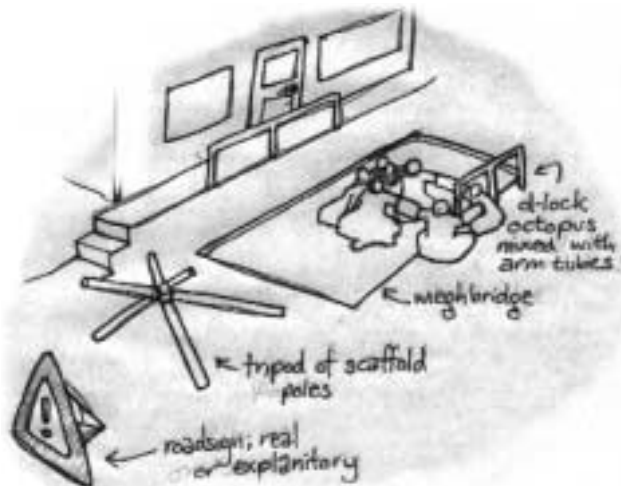
These are an essential accessory for arm tube use. The picture gives you an idea of what you need to achieve. It is best to use chain or metal rope cuffs using knives on sticks. Test any chain you consider using. If you can break it, don't bother using it!



Note Spring clips or snap hooks are a much cheaper alternative to climbing carabinas and can be found in most hardware stores.

A cautionary tale - " we were sat locked-on and the second lorry driver that approached us saw red. The support team stepped out in his path. He accelerated towards them fast, and despite his door being opened and a protester being pushed along in front of him he only stopped when simultaneously the manager appeared on the scene and someone jumped up and punched his windscreen (it fractured in front of his face). If he had not been stopped at that point things could have got really messy. He was just 15ft from us when he halted.

We realised afterwards that he had no way of knowing (without stopping to listen to the support people) that those on the ground really couldn't move out of his way. After this a tripod was cobbled together from some scaffolding bars on the site, and placed on the roadside approach to the weighbridge, but an official looking road sign with something along the lines of - 'if you drive at us you will kill us, we're chained together and can't move', would have been very useful."



Don't learn this lesson the hard way !

Be aware of the risks and be prepared.

Take something with you that can be used to physical and visually deter crazy hot headed drivers from driving into vulnerable people who are locked-on or up a tripod.

Silos, cranes and machinery

Silos are big cylindrical storage towers and often have ladders up the outside that can be climbed. Take something with you to bar any doors at the top so you can't be reached from the inside. Cranes provide similar joys. Climbing stuff can prove a great accompaniment to any action, large or small and offers a great opportunity for banner drops.

Locking-on to conveyorbelts or other machinery is another option but it may be difficult to check in advance just what is available. It is also potentially very dangerous and should probably only be attempted by people with plenty of experience of working together on actions.

For health and safety reasons they should shut off their machinery when it is being occupied. The support team needs to harass both the manager and the police about this until it happens.



Legal stuff

Everyone should have a full legal briefing before hand so they know what the consequences of being involved may be, and are comfortable with the police procedure. Getting arrested can be a surprisingly liberating experience, and although the following may seem a bit daunting try viewing the whole situation like a curious tourist and it's often quite entertaining. Information on legal matters can be as long as a piece of string, but the basic things to know are;

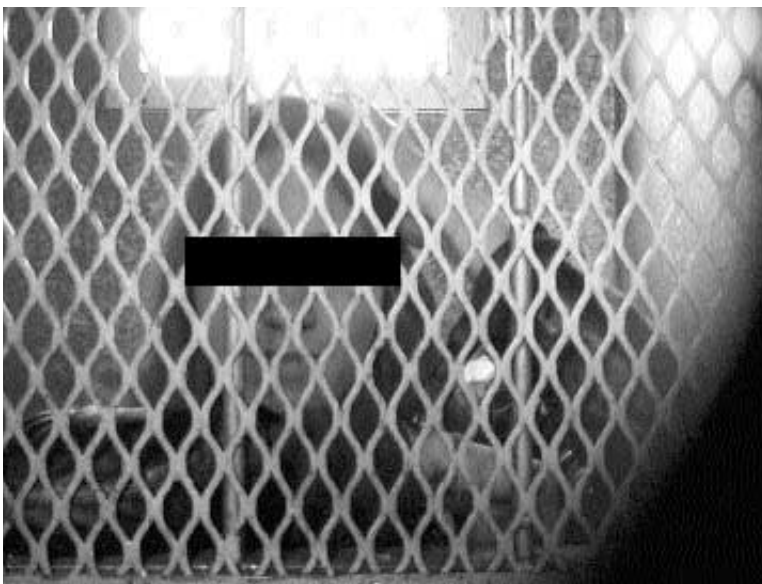
* If you're in a 'support' role, and not actively obstructing work then you're very unlikely to be arrested. Though if you are seen to be a focal point of the operations they may arrest you for something very minor, like breach of the peace, to get you out of the way for the afternoon. Breach of the Peace is a sort of police catch all, they can define it as almost anything they don't like and it's not technically a criminal offence, so they don't have the right to take your fingerprints at the station. Usually they don't pursue the charge and you'll be released from custody at the end of the day with no further consequences. If you're really unlucky and they have you down as a ringleader they may try and do you for 'conspiracy', a really nasty charge which they have great difficulty in convicting on; no one's been faced with it for a blockade action.

* If you're locked on they may arrest you for obstruction of the highway, assuming that you are on a public road or footpath. Aggravated Trespass is another possibility, although not on if you are on public land or inside (or on top of) buildings. This basically involves doing anything which obstructs people doing lawful work in the open air (so if what they are doing is illegal it can't be used). There are also a number of minor public order offenses they might try or even one of the Trade Union laws that were introduced to stop secondary picketing. This last one is perhaps the most worrying but least used. The rest usually carry only minor fines, typically no more than a couple of hundred pounds. Free information on these matters is available from the **Activist Legal Project 01865 243772 activistslegal@gn.apc.org**

* During three surprise blockades in the south west in 2001 there were no arrests. A publicly advertised blockade at a peat works in 2002 resulted in 35 arrests. Overall it seems that there is a fair likelihood that some people may be nicked.

A nice high arrest tally means you're far more likely to grab media attention and the courts can be a great forum to launch important issues into the public arena. Both these factors can mean that some companies are reluctant to press charges.

Being arrested means you may have to deal with the hassles of court and being on bail means you can't leave the country which could be a problem for some people. However, in a surprisingly high number of cases, the charges are dropped after only a few hearings anyway. If you are actually convicted (and remember you might be found not guilty), a criminal record can be an inconvenience with some future employers (though not with the better ones if you explain the circumstances of its acquisition).



If you get arrested while with a camera and somehow managed to retain it when thrown in the back of a police van then you too could take souvenir shoots from inside the 'meat wagon'.

You should however also consider what photos you might have already taken and whether they might incriminate yourself or others. Delete them or destroy the film if necessary.

If you get Arrested

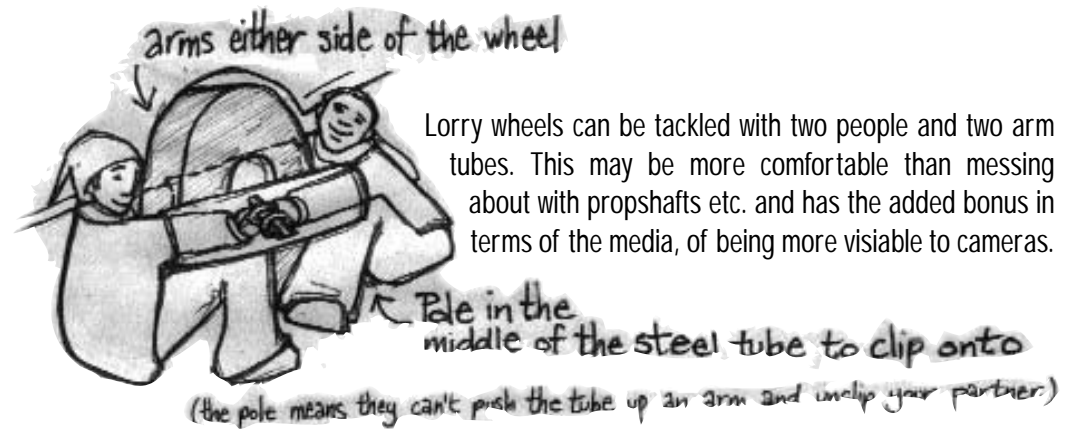
- * Stay calm. Make sure someone knows what's happening to you. (shout to them)
- * You have the right to know why you are being arrested, so ask.
- * Note the number(s) of your arresting officer(s), if possible.

At the Police Station

- * You have the right to have someone informed of your arrest.
- * You have the right to remain silent, there is NO requirement to talk to the police.
- * You have the right to a solicitor of your choice. If you're on the dole or a very limited income the costs will be covered by legal aid. You could use the free 'duty solicitor' available at the station; but don't confide in them (they tend to be rather too cosy with their hosts) but you could request their presence if you are interviewed.

The easiest and safest thing to do is to answer 'NO COMMENT' to all police questions. Interviews exist purely so the police can gather information to use against you and the others you were with. Only engage in them if you feel really confident that you can start an hour's monologue on horizontal gene transfer which will stop them getting a question in edgeways. If you want to explain why you were doing what you did then you could hand over a prepared statement which you'll then be able to refer back to in court, it should be short and simple. It does seem tedious to have to be so vigilant, but it's better than getting you and your friends fitted up for terrorism...

So don't sign any statement written by the police or sign any police notebook, apart from the list of your possessions (jewellery, shoelaces, anything in your pockets) which they will take from you before putting you in a cell (you will probably be searched on arrival).



Other bottlenecks

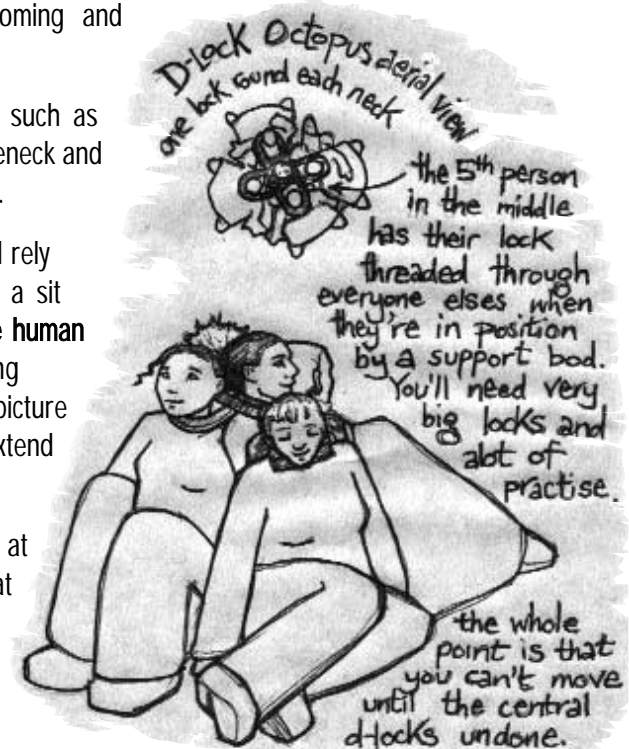
If the entrances are too numerous or difficult to obstruct, other potential bottlenecks such as tight corners, turning circles, loading bays etc. may still provide the opportunity to totally disrupt the days normal working routine.

For example, at GM animal feed mills the weigh bridges provided a great target. These glorified scales consist of a huge metal sheet big enough to park a lorry and are used to weigh incoming and outgoing loads.

If possible, lock-on to fixed objects such as lamp posts on either side of the bottleneck and form a human chain using arm tubes.

If there is nothing suitable, you could rely on a stand alone blockade such as a sit down, or much better, **an immovable human octopus** formed by D'locking yourselves together as shown in the picture (adding people and arm tubes to extend the area covered if needed).

You might prefer to ambush a lorry at the the bottle neck and lock-on to that using the same procedure describe earlier but the logistics may be harder away from the entrances.



If the gate is big enough for two lorries to pass you will then have to deal with incoming traffic. At least another five people will be needed to stroll up and stand around with placards until a another lorry attempts to come in through the free space. At this stage several people need to move out and stand in front of it (dragging something hefty like oil drums out into its path is also a good idea - see cautionary tale).

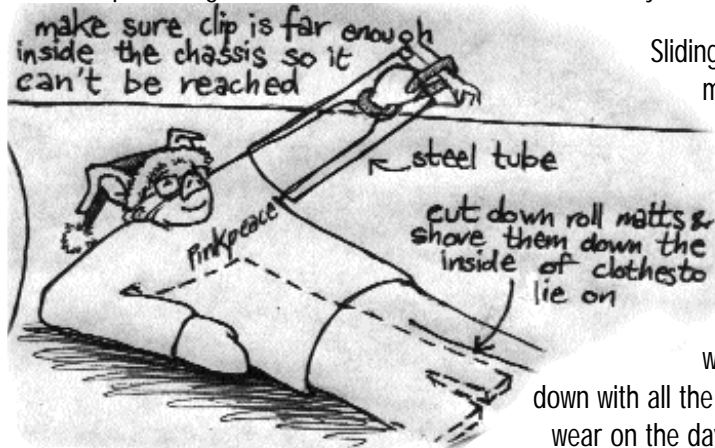


Two more people should then lock-on to the lorry using D'locks or arm tubes etc - but only when they're sure it has stopped and isn't going to try and move off. This is much more risky than working with a parked car in front of the lorry. Generally drivers know better than to drive into old fords which might dent their cab, but may try to accelerate towards a line of people. The tactic has been used a couple of times with no problems but a lot will depend on the attitude of the driver, so it may be worth waiting for a smiley one to come along.

If possible use lorries with the company logo on rather than independent hauliers who are far more likely to be personally affected by the action.

There are a multitude of ways you can lock-on to a lorry. D-locks round necks and through bumpers or steps are convenient and make for pretty pictures, but can be somewhat embarrassing if they just come along with a screwdriver and detach whatever it is your locked to from the lorry. Heavy transport neck accessories aren't big this season.

Prop shafts, the great fat pole running the length of the undercarriage are fairly fundamental, but also quite dangerous and hot if the lorries travelled any distance.



Sliding underneath and taking a few moments to have a look around can be most productive. An **arm tube** is more appropriate for that sort of situation. These can be made quite simply (see page ??). Check your tube is wide enough to get your arm down with all the layers of cloths you intend to wear on the day.

* The only information you have to give after arrest (but not before) is a verifiable name and a 'bail address'. This doesn't involve money, it is just an address where they can confirm you live (perhaps by phoning or sending a local copper round to knock on the door) before they let you go. You don't have to give a date of birth, but since they try to confirm your identity using computer records it may delay your release if you don't.

* If you want to see a doctor or need medication tell the police immediately. If you have any dietary requirements - veganism or particular allergies, also tell them on arrival.

* They can take fingerprints, DNA samples and your photograph, without your consent, only after you have been charged. They can use 'reasonable force' to take fingerprints and a saliva sample, but they can never use force to take your photograph.

* After being charged you may be asked lots of personal questions, you don't have to answer them. Don't.

* Please authorise the police and your solicitor to reveal information about your detention and welfare to the legal support person and ring them to tell them when you're released. (Only in exceptional circumstances you are likely to be held longer than overnight.)

If it's your first offence you may be offered a 'conditional discharge' which means you could walk free straight away without having to appear in court and if you behave yourself your police record will (theoretically) vanish in a year. It does mean an admission of guilt however, and usually means that they have little evidence anyway and probably wouldn't be able to get it through the courts. If in doubt always plead not guilty, on the basis that any law which convicts you for doing your duty is not worth recognising. If you can prove so in court you can afterwards sue the police for wrongful arrest and start an action kitty with the proceeds.

There should be someone available on a phone line to co-ordinate legal matters for people to ring when they're arrested. That way everyone can discover who's where and make sure they have everything they need. Being detained can be quite boring, so take a book to read with you at the beginning of the day. You are entitled to a pencil and paper and it's good to write down everything that led up to your arrest while the memory's fresh so you can contest their inaccuracies later. You're also entitled to read a copy of their codes of practice book, which will tell you your rights if you want to double check.

If at all possible, a friendly local solicitor should be approached so you know they'll be available on the day. Everyone should carry their number, and the number of the person co-ordinating support on a 'bust card' (see back cover) which will have your basic rights written on it so you can refer to them in moments of confusion. The police aren't used to detainees questioning their powers so be prepared for lots of indignant "but you have to's". Half the time they lose track of what they're entitled to do and what they're blagging, so stand your ground.

The Practicalities

The 'Reccy'

Finding a target should be easy. Information about company locations /head offices etc can be found on the companies own websites. If your looking for targets for GM actions Corporate Watch run www.gm-info.org.uk with all the information anyone could possibly want on animal feed mills and GM related institutions. If you're not on line or want a few direct pointers ring them on **01865 791391**. If you have a couple of possible sites locally check them both out - one may be more appropriate for your aims than the other.

It's really useful to know your site well, and it's only possible to recognise what target would be most appropriate by watching activity there discreetly. If there's an overlooking carpark and you have a car, take some binoculars and make notes at around the same time of the day and week as you're thinking of doing the blockade. Note traffic movements, how many entrances and exits there appear to be, any security guards, and the frequency of use of things like weigh bridges* and loading bays as well as appropriate places for protesters to lurk before going in. Go for a stroll as a lost temp or dog walker and take photos if you think you won't be clocked doing it. Draw a map of everything you've observed as soon as you get back to your car (you always think you'll remember it later and you never do). You'll probably need a couple of visits to do this to your satisfaction. For real thoroughness book an appointment to visit the manager for your Open University project, or deliver a bunch of flowers to the office. A few minutes actually wandering around inside the gates can be very useful. Checking out an aerial photograph of the area (on www.multimap.com/photoinfo.html) can also give you an interesting perspective.

A few weeks before the action **write to and ring the site** and try and ask the manager about his policy on your issue. If and how he responds will give you some idea of what to expect from him on the day, and the fact that you can claim to have tried more moderate means of persuasion first tends to go down well with the media. Try and be delicate about the matter so they don't totally expect you, but be glad if they show some paranoia levels. As within activism the worry of people being on the case about something is often far more debilitating than the few brief hours of the action itself.

Don't leave out those unable to actually make it on the day to the action. **Distribute the companies phone fax and e-mail** to your mates and get them to spend the day ringing your target, showering them with explanatory e-mails and putting letters of concern on a loop on their fax machines. This will ensure that the bureaucrats are deeply inconvenienced by your presence and are perfectly clear as to why you're there and that you're awesomely organised.

*see page 22

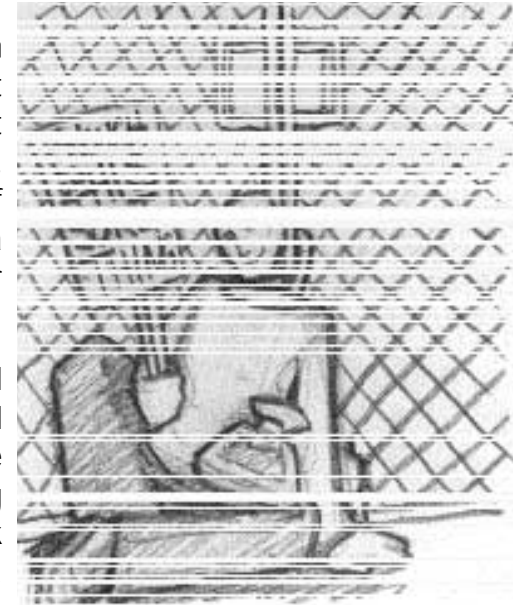
The options

Entrances

If your target has only one entrance, and the gates aren't locked open during the day, your action could be as simple as a couple of people **closing the gates** in a quiet moment, locking it with a quality chain and padlock, then walking off with the key. It usually takes them a good hour or so for them to figure out how to remove the lock (though beware of liftable hinges on gates) and there is nobody around to get arrested!

Better still (perhaps) is to **put your neck through a D-lock as well as the gate**. This will be a tight fit and mean that the lock can't easily be cut without the possibility of breaking your neck too. This method places just one person at risk of arrest and can keep them occupied for quite a while. The person locked on will need other people to provide support roles.

Be realistic about how long somebody could remain locked on as this will make life easier all round. Five or six hours in an uncomfortable position in midwinter is usually quite long enough. Think about whether to keep the D'lock key down your undies or with a friend. Somebody may try to search you.



Using Lorries

If the entrance is wide, and with no closeable gates, then another possibility may be to block it with their own delivery lorries. Park up in a car with a couple of people prepared to lock-on and at least three support people in a spot where you can clearly observe vehicles preparing to leave the site (without being too obvious).

When you see a lorry moving for the exit, drive out to meet it and park in front if it blocking its way. One support person should approach the driver and explain that there are two people attached to the lorry and that if he moves he will kill them. Ask him to switch his engine off and launch into the sort of spiel outlined in the communication chapter. Meanwhile the other support person clearly stands in front of the bumper to visibly underline the idea, and the others lock-on. The third support person should only drive off when given the nod from the talkers that the engine has been switched off and that the driver is calm and understands the situation.